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Housekeepers' Chat

Wednesday, November 14, 1928.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Getting the Flower Garden Ready for Spring." Subject matter prepared by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. D. A.

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"Aren't you forcing the season a little?" I asked my friend the garden adviser the other evening, when I found him moving some rose bushes to a new location.

"Not exactly forcing the season," he replied. "I'm just taking advantage of this nice fall weather; stealing a march on spring, you might call it. The soil is in splendid condition now; I want to get all of this kind of work done, because there's always a rush in the early spring. This piece of ground is not suited to roses. Do you see what I'm doing? Planting all of my roses in one general location, making a sort of rose garden, so that it will be easier to water and care for the roses."

"What will you plant, where the roses were?" I asked.

"Add the ground to my lawn," said W. R. B. "This piece of ground has been in cultivation for the past 14 years. It needs a rest. Besides, I have more land in cultivation now, than I can take care of. I'll spade the soil shallow, and spread some well-rotted compost over it. Early next spring, I'll rake the surface smooth, and sow lawn grass seed upon it."

"Will you trim your rose bushes this fall?" I asked.

"No," said my friend. "At least, not very much. I sometimes take off a few of the longest branches, and remove any dead wood, but I leave most of the pruning until early spring. See that pile of pine boughs over there? Well, last week when I was out in the country, I arranged with a farmer to bring me a small load of pine boughs, so that I would have them ready to use for protecting my roses, and covering any other plants that require winter protection. If I don't do certain things in the fall, I won't have my plants in shape to start off in the spring."

"What about your dahlias?" I asked. "They were beautiful this year. Where are you going to plant them next year?"

"Right over there near the grape arbor," replied the garden adviser. "And that reminds me, I must get a load of compost, spread it on that piece

of ground, and get it in shape for the dahlias next spring. Of course, I won't have to plant the dahlias very early, not until all danger of frost is past, but it pays to work the land in the fall, and have it ready for planting when you do want it.

"Compost is a problem with the average gardener," he continued. "It is often difficult to get the right kind of compost. See that pile of material back of the garden? I arranged with a dairyman to bring me a large load of compost from his dairy barn. The farmer who brought me the pine boughs, also brought a load of sods in his truck, underneath the pine boughs, I have piled the sods and the compost together. During the winter this material will decay. By spring time I will have a nice lot of compost for use around my roses, and other plants in my garden. If I didn't attend to this work, now, I surely would not have the compost to use next spring, because everybody is trying to get this kind of material in the spring of the year."

"What else will you do this fall," I asked, "to help along with the garden work next spring?"

"At least a dozen things," said W. R. B. "First of all, I will clean away all trash from around my shrubbery and perennials, and burn the trash, so as to get rid of any insects that may be hibernating in it. Otherwise, some of these insects would be on hand next spring, to trouble my crops. Then, I have several fence posts that need replacing, and the fence itself needs mending in several places. I want to paint the garage, too, because this is work I don't have time to do in the spring. You will see that I have sown rye on all the vacant land in my garden.

"There are still a few weeds in my perennial border, and I want to get them out this fall. If I don't, they will be there to annoy me next spring. I have two or three more shrubs to move. I want to get them moved this fall, because they are likely to start growing in the spring before I can move them. My hedge needs another trimming, to make it look neat during the winter.

"Another thing I must do is to get some new stakes ready for the dahlias next year. I used the old stakes the past season, but they were not satisfactory. Many of them broke during a storm we had in August. I'm going to get new stakes this fall, and store them in the basement, ready for use when I plant my dahlias next year.

"There's another little piece of work I must not forget; that is, to prepare four or five bushels of good soil, and store it in the garage, where I can get it for use later in the winter when I want to make my early planting of flower seeds. If I leave the preparation of this soil until the time when I want it, the ground is likely to be frozen, and it will be impossible to get good soil.

"All of this work must be done before the ground freezes. Of course,

the folks, living down South, can do work of this character almost any time during the winter, but even down South, it pays to prepare the ground in the fall, plant rye or some winter crop on it, and to have a compost pile ready for spring use. That's about all that I will need do until January. Then the new seed catalogues will be coming along, and I will get busy making my lists of seeds and plants that I will need for spring planting. I always resolve that I am going to make an early start, and have a better garden, next year; the time to get ready for next year's garden is during the fall, and early winter."

"Did you save any geranium cuttings?" I asked.

"Yes, I have quite a number in a large fern pan of sand in the sunny south window. They have rooted fine. They will make nice plants for planting in my mixed flower border next spring. Remember the little flowering begonia that I had in the garden border this year? Well, we have saved quite a number of plants for next year.

"I planted a bed of Regal Lily bulbs this fall. In a year or two I will have a fine showing of this beautiful lily. Next spring I am going to get some of the newer varieties of gladiolus, and a few more varieties of dahlias."

I asked W. R. B. where he was going to put all these flowers.

"Well, first of all," said he, "I am moving a portion of my vegetable garden to the back of the lot, and taking the ground where the vegetables were, for flowers."

"Are you going to give up growing vegetables?"

"No indeed, but I find that under the improved condition of my soil, I can grow the vegetables that we need on a smaller area. That leaves me more space for flowers. Yes, it makes a lot of work, but I enjoy it, and my neighbors seem to enjoy the flowers as well as I, so I think that it pays."

"I notice you have a lot of leaves piled in one corner of your garden; what are you going to do with them?" I asked.

"Make compost of them. I always pile any waste material from the garden in that corner and mix it with the leaves that I rake from my lawn. I also mix 40 to 50 pounds of superphosphate, with the leaves. This helps to compost them. The leaf compost makes an excellent top dressing for flower beds and for mixing with potting soil. Any more questions, Aunt Sammy?"

"Not this evening," I said. "But if my listeners write to me, in care of Station _____, and ask me questions about gardening, and house plants, I'm going to bring you the letters. Will you answer them? "

"I'll be glad to," said the garden adviser, as he prepared to move another rose bush.

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Tomorrow: "When Soup is the Main Course." Program includes menu and recipe.

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